

VZCZCXYZ0009
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHC #1264 1841844
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 021847Z JUL 08
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV PRIORITY 0000
RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN PRIORITY 0000
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0000
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0000
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0000
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0000
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 0000
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0000
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS STATE 071264

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHSA](#) [BM](#) [CY](#) [EN](#) [GM](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#) [SO](#) [UK](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: REPLY: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE MV LEHMANN
TIMBER

REF: A. A. DIPLOMATIC NOTE NO. 76 EMBASSY OF ESTONIA
[1](#)B. B. DIPLOMATIC NOTE EMBASSY OF UKRAINE

[1](#)1. (SBU) This is an action request. Drawing from the points in paragraph 3 below, Department requests Posts respond to diplomatic notes from the Embassy of Estonia (received 24 June, 2008) and from the Embassy of Ukraine (received 23 June, 2008) requesting supplies and assistance to Ukrainian and Estonian crew members on the hijacked vessel MV Lehmann Timber.

Background

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 28, 2008 the MV Lehmann Timber, which we believe to be either German- or Cypriot-owned and sailing under the flag of Gibraltar, was hijacked by Somali pirates in international waters in the Gulf of Aden. (Note: Equasis, a European Commission-French Maritime Administration sponsored database, indicates that a German company owns the vessel.) The crewmembers were taken hostage and the ship has since been relocated to Somali territorial waters. The crew is composed of Estonian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Burmese nationals. On June 23 and 24, 2008 the USG received official requests from the Governments of Estonia (GOE) and Ukraine (GOU) to consider transporting provisions to the ship, including drinking water, food, and medical supplies. According to the GOE, the crewmembers had been allowed to contact family members and had stated that they were being denied food and water and that the ship was running out of fuel. The GOE and the GOU have indicated that they do not have assets in the region that would be able to provide the requested assistance to the crewmembers.

[1](#)3. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: The Department requests that Posts draw from the

following points to convey a response to the Estonian and Ukrainian MFAs as soon as possible. Points were informally delivered on June 26, 2008 to the Estonian and Ukrainian Embassies in Washington, D.C. USNATO is authorized to draw from the talking points in any discussions of a possible NATO role in such situations.

Talking Points

-- The United States recognizes the importance of the issue of piracy and recognizes the concerns of the Republics of Estonia/Ukraine regarding the health and well-being of the crewmembers of the MV Lehmann Timber.

-- We have thoroughly considered your request. Following a comprehensive review, we have concluded that, in this particular instance, we are not in a position to provide the requested provisions of drinking water, food, and medical supplies to the crew of the MV Lehmann Timber.

-- Among the factors that weighed in our decision-making, two were especially significant: that providing the requested provisions would neither abate nor remedy the circumstances of the crew; and that the provision of such assistance only aids the cause of the hijackers and facilitates ongoing criminal activity.

-- In recognizing the continued importance of the issue of Somali piracy more broadly, the USG took a leadership role in actively supporting the recent passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1816 (2008). This resolution condemns piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and encourages States with military assets in the region to work together to deter such attacks and render aid to vessels threatened by or under attack. It also calls on flag states to provide guidance and training to vessel crews on avoidance, evasion, and defensive techniques; and on ships to avoid the area whenever possible.

-- For Embassy Tallinn: We commend Estonia's action to utilize NATO channels to approach individual Allies for assistance and to draw all Allies' attention to a situation with security implications for all.

-- We are prepared to join you in encouraging NATO to review the issue of piracy, looking at the specific situation of the territorial waters of Somalia as well as the potential for NATO action elsewhere and/or in other circumstances.

-- We believe the North Atlantic Council should consider how NATO might assume a more robust role in combating piracy or, at a minimum, establish a standing mechanism for providing assistance to Allies and partners that lack the capabilities and resources to respond themselves to acts of piracy.

14. (SBU) For info addressees: If you are approached by your

host government
regarding the MV Lehmann Timber, immediately report this fact
to Washington
and seek Department guidance as to how to respond.

15. (U) This message has been coordinated with DOD, NSC/HSCF
and additional
offices in the interagency. Questions concerning this action
request should
be directed to Mr. Robert Gilchrist, DOS Office Director for
Nordic and Baltic
Affairs, at GilchristRS@state.gov or (202) 647-6556.
RICE